Review of: "Tuckett, Christopher (ed.), Feasts and Festivals"

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Tuckett, Christopher (ed.), *Feasts and Festivals* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology, 53; Leuven: Peeters, 2009). Pp. viii + 183. Softcover. €38.00. ISBN 978-90-429-2262-4.

This volume consists of contributions to a 2008 colloquium in Oxford by members of the biblical studies departments from Bonn, Leiden, and Oxford. There are a total of 13 essays: three addressing Hebrew Bible texts, two addressing Second Temple topics, and the remaining eight dealing with the New Testament or early Christianity. This review will address the first five in some depth and simply list the titles of the others, as their focus lies outside the purview of this journal's interests.

Walter J. Houston opens the volume with "Rejoicing before the Lord: the Function of the Festal Gathering in Deuteronomy" (1–13). His essay briefly highlights a number of the recent developments in the study of food, drink, and feasts. He addresses the Deuteronomic festive calendar (ch. 16), taking the various articles by Georg Braulik as his point of departure and focusing specifically on the meaning of the term שׂמח, typically rendered "rejoice." He instead proposes the translation "celebrate," based on the fact that "…it better suggests a concrete action" (2), rather than an emotion, contra Braulik. He then moves to the theological and practical reasons for the progression in the text from the memorial, non-joyous Passover/Unleavened Bread to the celebratory Feasts of Weeks and Booths, insightfully showing that while there may be a movement from Passover to Weeks to Booths reminiscent of the move from Egypt to the Promised Land (at least in the canonical form of the text, I might add), the progression also reflects the rhythm of the agricultural year. Few families presumably had provisions for a feast at the time before the harvest. Houston's next section discusses the anthropological contributions of Victor Turner's *communitas* and Michael Dietler's donor feasts: He here offers an overview of how the provision of feasts by the more wealthy households—and ultimately by Yhwh—create on the one hand a national solidarity in line with the move towards a single sanctuary and on the other hand a sense of debt both from the poorer receivers of the feast to the wealthier households and from all participants to the ultimate provider, Yhwh. He concludes, correctly in my mind, that "Political equality as we understand it is not within the text's purview, but the text does provide a sound theological basis for it in the common terms on which all the people partake of the blessing of God" (13). By addressing questions of diet and ritual, along with attention to the text of Deuteronomy itself, Houston gives a helpful overview to many pertinent themes in the study of food, drink, and feasting.

Carly L. Crouch's "Funerary Rites for Infants and Children in the Hebrew Bible in Light of Ancient Near Eastern Practice" (15–26) investigates primarily David's atypical actions portrayed in 2 Sam 12 leading up to and following the death of his first child with Bathsheba but also the death of Jeroboam's son in 1 Kgs 14. Her aim is "to flesh out the brief biblical descriptions of these deaths through reference to the funerary practices of infants and children in the ancient near east" (16). Her basic argument for 2 Sam 12 is that David's actions prior to the death of his child constituted semi-formal mourning, which seems plausible. In her attempt to compare mourning rites for adults with those for children and infants, one of the important questions she addresses is the status of infants: whether or not they are viewed as full members of society (20–21). She notes that the archaeological record shows that, at times, the latter were buried differently. Crouch interprets this evidence as supporting the idea they were not full members of society—she may have mentioned also the penalty for causing a miscarriage in Exod 21:22, which stands in a long legal/scribal tradition (cf. Lipit-Ishtar 'lawcode' § d-f). The biggest difficulties I had with her analysis and argument, however, lie in the fact that she brings in archaeological data from as far afield the MBA in Tell Dan and Iron Age Cyprus without qualifying her use of the data. Secondly, the choice of the topic does not allow for firm conclusions: 2 Sam 12 depicts abnormal actions, and it is not clear how old Jeroboam's son Abijah is (in 1 Kgs 14:12 he is called a *yeled*, but in v. 17 a *naʿar*).

In "The Public Reading of Scriptures at Feasts" (27–44), Arie van der Kooij surveys vast territory

—mishnaic texts, Deut 31, Josh 8, Josephus' *Antiquities*, Neh 8, and 1 Esd. The essay shows that Josh 8 and 2 Kgs 23 are not meant to fulfill the ordinance to read "this law" every seven years as prescribed in Deut 31. Furthermore, Neh 8:1–6, which presents Ezra's actions quite similarly to those of Joshua in Josh 8 and Josiah in 2 Kgs 23, is, like them to be seen as a one time event meant to mark a new phase of history. In the case of Neh 8 (and 1 Esd 9) the reading of the law means to undergird Ezra's claims to authority. I found van der Kooij's presentation of 1 Esd particularly enlightening. Unlike Neh 8 // 1 Esd 9, Josephus sets Ezra's reading at Sukkoth, more in keeping with Deut 31. Van der Kooij makes one final claim: that the daily reading of the scroll of the torah of God in Neh 8:18 (at Sukkoth) recalls Num 29 rather than Deut 31, and "If so, it would mean that the tradition found in the Mishnah (*Meg.* 3.5) goes back to the late Persian period" (43). This final comment seems to be the justification for the discussion of the Mishnah earlier, but the claim would certainly require more support to be convincing. Perhaps the most important result of the essay is found in the final footnote, which states that the *irregular* events of the reading of the law in the biblical texts do not form an adequate foundation in themselves for the subsequent development of the synagogal practice. This weekly synagogal pattern cannot then be anchored in the early Persian period on the basis of the Neh 8 and Deut 31.

Tessel M. Jonquière, in "2 Macc 1.18–36: Nehemiah and the Festival of Purification" (45–56), discusses the unique narrative of the lighting of the Second Temple's sacrificial fire with petroleum found at the site where priests from the First Temple had hidden the holy fire at the time of the exile. Jonquière insightfully connects the mention of the "festival of booths in the month of Chislev" (1:9) with celebration of temple purification and of the festival/day of Booths and of fire in 1:18 (cf. 10:6 as well). She thereby highlights the issue that arises from the close identification of the two festivals and the connection of Booths with the date for Hanukkah. Problematically however, from this basis she argues that Hanukkah and Booths were once a single festival. I found myself wondering what evidence there is for a break in the celebration of Booths during Tishri (the seventh month) when it is celebrated in Chislev? The suggestion that the Tishri celebration of Booths was unknown seems unlikely. She also contends that this tradition is simply the only one known to the author for the foundation of Hanukkah: "In consequence we may assume that, after Judas purified the temple, the people started to celebrate the event, taking an existing festival to do so: the Festival of Fire and of Nehemiah's purification" (48–49). While Jonquière goes on to note that the meanings or stories associated with festivals can change through time, it seems more plausible to this reviewer to imagine (with Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* [CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008], 528–29) that this story is inserted later to bolster Maccabean claims to divine favor of the Jerusalem Temple.

The final essay addressing HB/OT questions directly is Johannes Magliano-Tromp's "The Relations Between Egyptian Judaism and Jerusalem in Light of 3 Maccabees and the Greek Book of Esther" (57–76). Magliano-Tromp first recounts and critiques R. B. Motzo's ("Il rifacimento greco di Ester e il III Maccabei" [1924]) position that Greek Esther relies on 3 Maccabees. Some similarities named by Motzo would have been available to the author of Greek Esther from other sources as well, while other resemblances between the two books are not quite as close as Motzo implies. Magliano-Tromp then considers N. Hacham's argument ("3. Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality, and Diaspora Identity," *JBL* 126 (2007): 765–85) for literary dependency on the basis of linguistic evidence. While rightly expanding the search for linguistic similarities beyond Hacham's limited look at the Septuagint, Magliano-Tromp nonetheless remains open to the proposition that at least the Additions to Esther rely on 3 Maccabees, albeit not in any systematic way. The payoff for working through these issues in terms of feasts comes when considering why 3 Maccabees or Greek Esther might have constructed their narratives the way they did. The texts are quite similar, though promote different feasts. Recent scholarship contends, therefore, that the different communities were trying to impose their festival on the other group. Magliano-Tromp by contrast asks, could it not have been the case that Egyptian and Palestinian Jews maintained more cohesive and symbiotic relations rather than competitive and mutually distrusting ones? The basis of this important question for both these texts, and for many studies in HB/OT in general, might be summarized in his question: "…whether it is an efficient method of persuasion to write treatises and counter-treatises that leave their purpose implicit" (71)? Whether or not one is convinced by Magliano-Tromp's rather positive take on the relations between the various communities, I find the underlying question worth reconsidering.

The remainder of the volume is made up of eight essays addressing NT and early Christian themes: John Muddiman, “The Triumphal Entry and Cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11.1–17 and parallels): a Jewish Festival Setting?” (77-86); Christina Risch, “The Wine-Symbolism in the Old Testament and Jewish Tradition and its Relevance for the Interpretation of the Lord's Supper” (87–95); Mary Marshall, “‘Blessed is Anyone Who Will Eat Bread in the Kingdom of God’: A Brief Study of Luke 14.15 in its Context” (97–106); Jochen Flebbe, “Feasts in John” (107–24); Christian Blumenthal, “Feste und Feiern in den paulinischen Gemeinden: Quellen- und wissenschafts-sprachliche Erwägungen” (125–46); Stefan Schapdick, “The Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem on μία σαββάτου (1 Cor 16.2)” (147–60); Valeriy Alikin, “The Origins of Sunday the Christian Feast-Day” (161–70); and Michael Wolter, “Primitive Christianity as a Feast” (171–82).

In sum the essays consider the feasts and festivals with a number of different purposes in mind, though often more as a means toward discussing a different question, rather than focusing on the feast or festival itself. Perhaps one methodological question that remains from the collection is just what is meant by a "feast" or a "festival"? Do Sabbath synagogal meetings and early Christian Sundays qualify? This volume answers affirmative, but how is this grounded? I do think there are answers at hand, but perhaps a more substantial introduction could have brought the collection together into a more cohesive contribution. As it is the individual essays are left to stand or fall on their own, and given the relatively thin coverage on the issues at hand, they are welcome additions.

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